

Local pop culture expert embraces smarter films

By KATHY RUMLESKI, FREE PRESS REPORTER

A pop culture specialist is hoping people will watch more meaningful and artistic DVDs in the coming year.

Tim Blackmore, an Information and Media Studies professor at Western, has produced a 2007 Top 10 list and you'll find little of the Hollywood glitter in these selections.

He said most of the top-selling DVDs, such as Live Free or Die Hard, Spider-Man 3 and Transformers (which are all on Yahoo's Top 10 list for 2007), are "empty of heart."

To broaden our movie viewing, Blackmore suggests we "look to other countries, look to other forms." He said some of these films may look strange for the first 10 or 15 minutes, but keep with them.

"Don't walk in and out. You sit and watch," he said.

Here is Blackmore's list, with some description of each by him:

1. **Tekkon Kinkreet**: Easily one of the most blindingly strange and wonderful animations from Japan, this is about two boys who contain between them one identity, one city. The cityscapes are glowing painted visions of both the nightmares and daydreams cities can be.

2. **Shadow Company**: This documentary features two thoughtful interviews with Canadians, journalist and author Madeline Drohan (known particularly for her book Making a Killing) and a retired veteran who has his eye on Canada's place in the world community of war fighting and peacekeeping.

3. **In the Year of the Pig**: Emile D'Antonio uses the Army-McCarthy hearings to reflect on the fragility of justice in government and made one of the most heart-breaking and amazing documentaries about the Vietnam War.

4. **Monster**: The story concerns a brilliant surgeon who inadvertently saves a young boy who is capable of serial murder and is host to some kind of monster from Revelations. Astonishing and gripping in the way that any art about ethics and truth can be.

5. **Animaniacs**, Volume 3: The continued revisiting of some of the most intelligent and hilarious animation to come out of America since Robert McKimson and Chuck Jones stopped drawing suicidal coyotes, sadistic rabbits and loudly insane ducks.

6. **Manufactured Landscapes**: An eye-bending vision of China and the world of human technology viewed through the eyes of photographer Edward Burtynsky.

7. **Rivers and Tides**: Another intricate and gorgeous (and very much uplifting) film about an artist (Scotsman Andy Goldsworthy) at work and play in the natural world.

8. **Paprika**: Yet another in the line of spectacularly strange and fabulously insane films from Japan's animation master Satoshi Kon.

9. **Joyeux Noel**: A thoughtful, careful, unromantic, and for that all the more touching, remembrance of the famous 1915 Silent Night incident where the allies and the Germans met in No Man's Land and drank together and celebrated with each other.

10. **Ratatouille and Flushed Away**: For the sheer fun of it, for the lightning animation and artistry of everyone working on this film, Ratatouille is a true delight. Flushed Away's continuing genius depicting rodents living in hidden cities also humanizes the difference between empty and full lives.